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# THE JOURNAL OF THROSSEL HOLE PRIORY

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**THROSSEL HOLE PRIORY** is a training monastery and retreat centre following the Serene Reflection Meditation tradition (Soto Zen). It is affiliated with Shasta Abbey whose Spiritual Director is Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett. Shasta Abbey is the headquarters of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives and is located in Mount Shasta, California. The monks of Throssel Hole Priory are members of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives and follow the teaching and example of Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett.

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**PLEASE NOTE.** We would like to clarify our use of the word 'He' when referring to the 'Eternal,' the 'Cosmic Buddha,' the 'Dharmakaya,' 'Avalokiteshwara Bodhisattva' etc. Whenever 'He' is used, understand that what is meant is 'He/She/It.' We simplify our usage in this way so that the continuity of the articles is not repeatedly broken up by the form 'He/She/It,' and also because we have not yet found another word which conveys the complete meaning.

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# News from the Tiger's Lair

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[ 'News from the Tiger's Lair' is reprinted from the *Journal of the Order of Buddhist Contemplatives*. It appears here with the kind permission of the author, Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett, M.O.B.C. ]

## The Law of Dependent Origination

[The following article is from a lecture given by Rev. Master Jiyu during the monastic retreat, December 1980. It was first printed in *The Journal of Shasta Abbey*, Sept-Oct. 1981, Vol. XII, nos. 9 & 10. ed.]

Homage to the Buddha,  
Homage to the Dharma,  
Homage to the Sangha.

In the history of the final attainment of one of Buddhism's great saints, the Venerable Phra Acharn Mun, is the following piece of information: "From evening to late that night, the night of full final attainment, Venerable Acharn contemplated the Law of Dependent Origination, both during walking meditation and sitting meditation, in both its serial and reverse order, backwards and forwards again and again, traversing and re-traversing the great domain where ignorance and desire have been massing to create various aspects of suffering within the mind.<sup>1</sup> This was the most critical point of the battle in which he struck the death-dealing weapon of great-mindfulness and

great-wisdom against ignorance, which is renowned for its most skilful tactics. Ignorance is clever, not only in its defensive manoeuvres, whereby it is adroitly evasive, but also in aggressive strategy, whereby it can launch a surprise attack upon its opponent with devastating results. What else, of course, is to be expected of one who has been reigning over the Great Kingdom of Rebirths and Redaths from time immemorial, with the minds of sentient beings within its powerful grip? But in the life-and-death struggle with the Venerable Phra Acharn Mun that night, the powerful and crafty monarch of the Three Realms [the Lord of Ignorance] was helplessly dethroned. He was toppled and fell before the relentless strikes of the great weapon of great-mindfulness and great-wisdom [which is known as the Sword of Buddha's Wisdom]. His theretofore unchallenged authority, in the case of other worldlings, was challenged by the Venerable Acharn, and he was finally and absolutely defeated."2

Too many people know of suffering's existence but they do not know its cause, nor do they know its cessation. The serial and reverse orders of the Law of Dependent Origination are in fact suffering's cause and the cessation of suffering. For, although Zen is often said to be a moment—a blinding flash—of understanding, Zen (which simply means 'meditation') is as much dependent upon the Four Noble Truths as is any other school of Buddhism. And those who practice meditation must go through the existence of suffering, suffering's cause and the cessation of suffering before they can learn to use, to its full advantage, the Eightfold Path—which is really how to stay in the state of the cessation of suffering. So we should look at the Law of Dependent Origination as the Second and Third Noble Truths, with the moment of enlightenment—the moment of full acceptance—as that moment in which the full understanding of the Law of Dependent Origination is reached. Too many people have past-life experiences and do not realize that what they are seeing, hearing and feeling is, in fact, a reenactment of what took place in their own case concerning the Law of Dependent Origination (i.e. because such and



such happened, such and such took place).

In the translator's notes at the end of Venerable Acharn's biography we find the following: "The Law of Dependent Origination shows the conditioning and dependent nature of the uninterrupted flow of manifold physical and psychical phenomena of existences which we conventionally call the ego, or man, or animal, etc." This flow will be constant if one does not meditate deeply enough to find out its cause. When one sees what happened in one's past existences, one is able to trace many things. But it is constantly going backward and forward, backward and forward that eventually reveals the complete cause. And this again is just as much true with Zen as it is with any other school of Buddhism.

At some time in the past someone accidentally made the course of karma and, at least in all the cases I have seen, karma has been caused through very slightly saddened love. Because of this, the chain of Dependent Origination is formed: the rebirth-producing volitions or karma impregnations cause the conditioning of the future rebirths. Through the karma impregnations from past lives our consciousness in the present life is conditioned. Through this consciousness are conditioned the mental and physical phenomena of a human being (i.e., body and mind) or that which makes up our so-called individual existence. Through these mental and physical phenomena our five physical senses and our consciousness are conditioned, and these physical senses and consciousness are conditioned by the impressions that these karma impregnations have made upon us. And, because of these impregnations, our feelings are conditioned and, because of these feelings, craving and clinging rearise and thus the whole process of rebirth and redeath constantly continues.

Because of the slightly saddened love which did not understand real love, karma came about. But this slightly saddened love was not the sort of love that is found in the Unborn, the Undying, the Uncreated and

Unchanging. Rather it is the 'me' type of love—'I' am hurt, 'I' am saddened. To say 'slightly saddened love' is wrong but it is a term that everyone can understand. If we say that we were hurt because what we believed to be love was spurned, we are closer. If we had known true love, the love of the Unborn and the Undying, then such a mistake would not have been made. Getting past this slightly saddened love is one of the gravest barriers in training. It is so easy to mistake a really beautiful and genuine attachment for love. A person who is truly attached to helping his fellow men may well believe that this is genuine love and, when those fellow men are not as grateful as he thinks they should be, then he is hurt and starts making karma. A Bodhisattva can make the same mistake. He can see people who are turning away from the Teaching and try to chase after them because he loves them and wants them to have the Teaching, but this too is an attachment. In the true love that is the Cosmic Buddha's love, there is no attachment: if someone comes, that is good; if he goes, that is his decision. There is complete free will in this.

In the time of Shakyamuni Buddha the unbelievers were allowed to depart just as they were in the time of Phra Acharn Mun who died in 1949. Any time someone tries to tell the Truth and get beyond the Love and Light Heresy,<sup>3</sup> there will be unbelievers. In this present day and age when social work has largely taken over or, at any rate, deeply over-shadowed the right occupation of the priest, it is hardly surprising that we find the Love and Light Heresy flourishing with such strength in this country. But it is deeply important to know that this is an attachment, however exquisite it may appear to be. I strongly suspect that the Love and Light Heresy is responsible for far more karma than any other single heresy, although I have no statistics to prove it. This type of ignorance brings the karma process into being—which produces consciousness, craving, clinging and the whole process of rebirth. Because we are conscious, because we have a body, a mind that can think and five senses, we continue the rebirth process. But here we have to



remember with great care that the body and the mental mind with which we are blessed are also the means by which we can get away from our present cycle of rebirths and redeaths and get back to that exquisite state which we held before the ignorance took over. For it is through the aegis of this physical body that we are enabled to be here today and to sit in this hall for sesshin. And it is through the transcendence of thinking (i.e., the "neither trying to think nor trying not to think" of the *Rules for Meditation*, just sitting without judgemental thought) that we find the way in. By transcending body and mind, which is the way of Zen, we can break this particular chain.

As we begin this sesshin we need to look at the 'coming from' and the 'returning to'. Only if we deal with what comes up in past-life understanding completely rather than on a very shallow level and make sure it is not repeated, only if even the most beautiful things are seen in their true form without spurning them and without clinging to them (just understanding them and therefore being unbound by them), will we transcend thought and transform mentality into Buddha Mind. For it is by transcending our human mind that we find the Mind of Buddha. By dropping our own personal likes and dislikes, by losing our own personal attachments, by being willing to give up the material rewards of this world ("Look what a lot I have done for charity; look what a lot I have done for society"), by giving up the results of our attachment to doing good and even to wanting everyone to be with the Cosmic Buddha, we can truly transcend thought and live in that place where the love of the Unborn, the Undying and the Uncreated exists. And only in that place can we do real good, completely ceasing from evil and doing good for others. In any other place all we do is continue the attachment to ignorance.

So, looking at the Chain of Dependent Origination, the place to start during this sesshin is with the fourth and fifth steps: transcending this body and transcending this mind, for you will start the rebirth



process all over again if you do not do this. If body and mind are not allowed to fall away naturally, then, as Dōgen says, you are doomed to another round. And who knows if you will be human the next time round? Too often people lecture on the Law of Dependent Origination and go through it as an analytical study instead of realizing that the place to stop is at step number four. One must start doing something about transcendence, about knowing ignorance for what it is, and about knowing the Love and Light Heresy as the most dangerous and the most insidious of all ignorances. I am frequently barraged with appeals to help this or that organization. If I had a money tree that gave me millions I would not be able to satisfy those huge, gaping holes. But if I truly do something about myself, if each of us truly does something about ourselves, then we can and will be able to give genuine help, even if only by the fact that some of us are not constantly being reborn and adding to the collection of karma.

During this sesshin, examine and reexamine forwards and backwards. Look at everything that happened in your past lives and in this life. Look at everything that you do and find out if perhaps there is not some bit of attachment there. Are you sure you are doing it for the right reason? Please look with great care. And then, having had a good look, consider what happened to the Venerable Phra Acharn Mun after his great understanding. His biographer says:

After a while, when the thunderous sound had died down, what remained of him was the absolute purity of the Dharma which bathed his body and mind and enveloped all the worlds. To him it was so breathless a wonder that it was indescribable to others. Whatever loving-kindness and interest there had been in teaching others now momentarily disappeared. This was because of the realization of the fact that the Dharma at this level is so subtle, profound and wonderful that it would be practically

impossible for most people to understand. [To know and to feel the love of the Cosmic Buddha, which is your true inheritance, is something so far beyond anything that a human being who has not experienced it can imagine that it might do harm to even try to express it.] For a moment he hesitated to offer the Truth to others, being content with experiencing the wonders of the Dharma alone. He was overcome with gratitude towards the Buddha, who realized the whole truth and who proclaimed it for the sake of Deliverance....Through respectful gratitude, he was moved to an insatiable recollection all night of the virtues of the Buddha and his excellence. But so profound is the Dharma that to preach it would be inviting harsh and hostile criticism from the unbelievers and, as a result, efforts in that direction would hurt rather than help others. [This was how he felt at the time. It was not until after he remembered that the same thing occurred to the Buddha Himself and that, if the Buddha had not preached what He knew, he, Venerable Phra Acharn Mun, would not now have found the way, that he decided he would teach others.] He decided to bring the Buddha's message once again to those who would listen to it in earnest and with respect. There would be no point in teaching those who would not listen to or who would listen without respect or interest [or who would merely listen out of curiosity], taking the Dharma for granted and treating it as merely commonplace. [The Supreme Dharma, the love of the Cosmic Buddha, is only won after a series of very painful ordeals on the part of those who would go back and look at the mistakes of the centuries.] It was therefore useless "dissolving" the priceless Dharma "in the ocean" as one would dissolve a worthless thing. It was



for the sake of those who are willing to listen that the Dharma was proclaimed. A physician prescribes a remedy for his patients with a view to curing them of their suffering and pain. But as long as they prefer living with their disease, they turn a deaf ear to the physician's advice.

If you wish to listen to my advice during this sesshin go back and forth on what you have found out about yourselves over the years, on what you know of the karma you have inherited. It is not enough to go through it all once. You must see every single tiny root of suffering's cause if you would know the full cessation of suffering. This is absolutely imperative.

Homage to all the Buddhas in all worlds,  
Homage to all the Bodhisattvas in all worlds,  
Homage to the Scripture of Great Wisdom.

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#### Notes.

1. The Law of Dependent Origination states that ignorance (step 1) conditions karma-formations (2), which conditions consciousness (3), corporeality (4), five senses plus mind (5), impression (6), feeling (7), craving (8), clinging (9), process of becoming (10), rebirth (11), and old age and death (12).

2. Venerable Phra Acharn Mun Maha Boowa Nyanasampanno, comp., *The Venerable Phra Acharn Mun Bhuridatta Thera* (Bangkok: Mahamakut Rajavidyalaya Press, 1976), pp. 114 - 115.

3. The belief that love is all, that enlightened man is not bound by the law of karma, that one need not face and accept one's humanity (one's human birth as well as one's particular karmic stream which contains the myriad aspects of previous existences). This belief can lead to gross irresponsibility. For a further explanation, see 'Cultivating the Willingness to Train' in the March-April 1981 issue of *The Journal of Shasta Abbey*.

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# Bonds of Doubt

Rev. Daishin Morgan, M.O.B.C.

Doubt and fear are two important hindrances that we have to overcome in training. They are linked together because doubt is an expression of fear. Doubt makes the medicine of the Dharma ineffective by causing us to apply the teaching only partially or not at all. Doubt can be defined as an obstruction that prevents the mind from knowing the heart. It is an inability to decide about truth and untruth; it stops us from accumulating good by cutting us off from our own heart. By contrast, faith is a willingness to accept what the heart knows.

In the West we are taught to value doubt as a means towards knowledge. However, we need to understand the critical difference between inquiry and doubt. Doubt seeks conflict while inquiry is simply a wanting to know. Doubt seeks conflict because it arises out of attachment to an existing view. Inquiry is an exploration with an open heart and mind that includes a willingness to enter the unknown. It is important to see the difference between knowledge and opinion. Often, what we accept as knowledge is what we already believe, or what accords with our opinions. Once we have accepted an opinion we identify with it so that it becomes our opinion, and its correctness reflects our correctness or adequacy as a person. Attachment to opinion is the result of self-doubt, a defensive posture taken by a fearful self. We feel the need to cling to the unreal self because we do not know, or doubt, our true nature. The unreal self is nothing more than a collection of opinions and mental posturings, but it causes us much pain.

When we hold a certain opinion we establish a self that holds it. When we sit still in meditation where is the self? It takes faith in our true nature to have the confidence to let go of the opinion and



therefore the self. It is our heart that has true knowledge. The intellect can either serve the heart or fight against it. The intellectual mind is very valuable, but it is an instrument that must serve and not be master. The intellect cannot perceive Truth directly, but it can process information about Truth and help us realise what it is we have understood with the heart.

Logic, one of the great tools of the intellect, also has its limits. The outcome of logical analysis depends upon its starting point. If we use logic from a starting point of attachment, then we shall reap confusion. If we start from the heart and use the mind with faith, then logic will lead to clarity. It is doubt of our true nature that prevents us from entering the unknown and it is faith that opens the way. In order to live from the Truth in ourselves we have to learn how to be still enough to listen to it. Once we have grounded ourselves correctly we can utilise the intellect to understand what the heart points to. The intellect is not opposed to the heart, they are both different aspects of the same thing. The mind of faith is one that is able to recognise the unity of things, while the doubting mind divides everything and sets up conflicts. True knowledge is that which the heart confirms and which experience verifies. For this knowledge to be expressed and developed into a logical teaching the intellect is needed. But in no sense does true knowledge depend upon the intellect.

Truth cannot be known by argument. Argument is defending a view to which we are attached. We do not perceive Truth through the conflict of setting one thing against another. A true Dharma discussion occurs when participants are not trying to defend a position but are simply inquiring into the nature of Truth together. Argument will never take us into the realm of direct perception of the Truth. It is only when we let go of all positions that we can enter the world of Truth. Our tradition teaches that we must give up everything if we wish to know the Truth. Only when we let go of body and mind can this happen. We fail to

do this because we fear that letting go of the manufactured self will cause us to fall into an emptiness where we will be nothing. But there is a truly adequate, enlightened being inside all of us that is only obscured by our clinging to a separate self. Our fear causes us to doubt, and so it is difficult to find the true refuge. Once you trust the Buddha Nature you find that far from being frightening, it is pure compassion and unconditional acceptance, which is love. It is never cold and empty, although it is formless and defies our attempts to grasp it. We only fear that it might be cold and empty before we let go and discover its true nature. The cold emptiness is the state of being separated from our true refuge—which is the state of doubt.

It may seem that we cannot function in the everyday world without opinions. Certainly the world expects us to have opinions. The conventional idea of 'knowing your own mind' consists in having an established set of opinions that you can support by argument. However, from a Buddhist perspective this is delusion. How then does a Buddhist function when called upon to act? A Buddhist takes refuge in the Three Treasures of Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, not in opinions. That means basing one's actions upon what the heart recognises as good. This is not the sentimental heart, but the heart of wisdom. We take refuge in the Buddha within, and take the Dharma, the teaching, as our guide, while having the humility to check our understanding with those more experienced than us within the Sangha. Not yet being fully enlightened, we could be wrong. That means we need the humility to recognise when we are wrong, while having the confidence to go ahead on the assumption that we have understood correctly. Far from being blind, faith is the ability to see with the heart. We know by faith before we know with the mind. Faith in the heart cannot co-exist with attachment to opinions.

The process of training is a process of dealing with doubt on deeper and deeper levels. We usually begin wanting to settle our intellectual doubts and



our doubts about the efficacy of the practice. Once we meet others who practice sincerely, and we recognise the way that training has helped them, we begin to grow the faith that we can do it too. Experience of meditation then increases our faith as we see how it helps us in our own lives. Our commitment increases and this in turn enables us to let go of the self on deeper levels. However, as long as there is clinging to self there will be doubt. It may be dormant, but sooner or later it will appear. The self trails a hook of doubt, and sooner or later that hook will snag on something. This will often take the form of an issue we find troublesome. Instead of checking with our heart to see what is good to do, the self rebels and in effect says "I have given so much, I am entitled to complain!" The awakened doubt tends to escape and seek an outlet in speech or action. If this is understood and one is prepared, then the dormant doubt can arise and be dissolved without harm. But if one does not recognise that it is an eruption of the frightened self, one becomes blinded and can fall away from practice.

Both Great Masters Dōgen and Keizan, and all the Great Masters in our lineage, warn of the dangers of erudition. This is because it is another form of doubt. Erudition is the reliance upon the intellectual mind to know, rather than the heart. There are long periods in training when spiritual confirmations seem far away, and we journey through a desert. Doubt is a great danger because at these times we feel particularly vulnerable. "If the going is hard and confirmations so distant, perhaps I am following the wrong road?" We do not yet have our own certainty and so we try, in effect, to steal it by attempting to fill the void with books. This is to count in the treasury of others and to miss your own. At such times it is important to seek help from a true teacher. One who can offer reassurance and encouragement and who can show us how to use our time in the desert fruitfully. For there are vital lessons to be learned about what we truly depend upon that can only be learned when all the compensations are taken

away.

The scriptures speak of three stages of doubt; dormant doubt, risen doubt and doubt giving rise to transgression. Dormant doubt is overcome by wisdom; that means the insight that all conditioned things are ultimately unsatisfactory, impermanent and devoid of self. In short, the insight that the only true refuge is the Unborn. Once doubt has arisen it is overcome by true contemplation of its nature. This means being still with it, recognise that it is just the frightened self, and avoiding getting caught up in the issue that the doubt attaches itself to. Let the doubting thoughts go and be still with the essence of it. If you indulge the doubting thoughts then the doubts will be endless. If the doubt is unchecked it will leak out, and if you act upon it it causes suffering. When the doubt seeps into our speech and actions it drives a wedge between ourselves and that which we hold most dear. If this happens we must increase our efforts to refrain from wrong speech, from anger and from defaming others. By ceasing from evil we can become peaceful enough within to see what we are doing. When we do not refrain from evil then we cause grief to others and to our own heart.

Doubt that is unchecked can lead to scepticism. This is a predisposition to look negatively, a tendency towards disbelief and a desire to pull down anything that reflects the qualities of faith. When one is sceptical, fear causes us to pull down that which is pure. Scepticism is deeply afraid of true certainty and wishes to destroy it.

Although being a monk is what I value most in this life, when fear of giving up everything has arisen within me, it has caused me to doubt the Teaching, my Teacher, and myself. I needed to go deeper in my training and yet I was afraid to take the next step, yet to hesitate was destroying what I valued most. The fear of losing my way spiritually was getting tangled up with the fear of letting go of myself, but I was looking outside myself for the cause of my



unease. Doubt began to spiral out of control and I began to argue more ferociously than ever. The doubt focused upon the method and personality of my Master since for me she was, and is, the symbol of what it means to give up the self and be one with the Unborn. What I was fighting inwardly I began to fight outwardly.

Far from being offended by my doubt, Rev. Master Ji-yu was incredibly kind and generous. When my doubt was met with love it was unsustainable—because I knew it was wrong and felt the pain it caused. Still, it did not just evaporate; I had to recognise what it was and lay it down. But her generosity of spirit helped me to see it, and showed me how to deal with it. The doubting self must be respected and loved, but the doubts must not be indulged. Because the origin of doubt is fear, we need to offer ourselves the reassurance of love—that which accepts without reservation. When we are caught up in fear it leads to more fear, and if we do not begin to see what is happening, we block ourselves off from our own heart and from whatever reflects the truth of our heart in the world. Thus, when we could have had the greatest treasure, we settle for a cheap bauble. The stakes are very high.

The settling of doubts is not achieved by a surrender of intelligence, nor by self abnegation. I still come across things where I have a different view from that held by my Master and there are some aspects of the Teaching that I still have on a back burner. These things do not get in the way when there is a deep trust because that enables me to let go of my defensiveness. This trust is based in a certainty of where I stand and the knowledge that my Master and I stand in the same line. We are one and individual at the same time and there is no contradiction. All is one and all is different. We are individuals and we are one within the Unborn. How can I be true to myself and true to the Unborn? The self fears the Unborn because it believes that oneness will be its extinction, but this is not so. Although the dew drop must, in the end, slip into the shining sea, the dew

drop takes on a larger life than it ever knew before. From the standpoint of that larger life there can be different views between Master and disciple without that causing a ripple, so long as the disciple is willing to take refuge in the shining sea. If the disciple insists on being separate, then he will never know trust on a deep enough level to experience unity, and so never know his true relationship with the Unborn. The only solution to the kōan is to go forward in faith and lay one's doubts upon the altar as an offering to the Buddhas. Such an offering causes joy to fill the universe.

The experience of doubt I have described will not match yours exactly. For one thing I am writing some time after the event with the benefit of much reflection. At the time it was far from clear to me what was happening and I had to go on faith. You may not be a monk and able to have the same kind of close contact with a Master, yet the same principles apply. We are all called to enlightenment and we all experience a fear of offering ourselves. The manner in which the heart calls us to give is different, but the gift is the same.

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## Myrtlebank & Building News

**Myrtlebank:** The purchase of Myrtlebank was completed on December 7. We would like to thank our friends and supporters for helping the Priory to take this important step in its development. We would also like to offer our special thanks to Chris Charles of 'Blagg, Son and Masefield' for donating his services as solicitor for the conveyancing. He dealt with our esoteric queries and requests with patience, thoroughness and good humour.

Now that we have taken possession of the property there are a number of jobs that need to be done soon: treatment for woodworm, rewiring, and extending the central heating system. These are things which will cause less disruption if they are done before we actually move into the building, and so this will now be our work priority. When we are able to move in, we will need to set about furnishing. If you would be able to help with the donation of any of the following items of furniture, such help would be greatly appreciated: Single beds, wardrobes, desks, chests of drawers, comfortable chairs, upright chairs, settees, bookcases, and carpets with plain or subdued patterns. If you have such items in good condition and are able to donate them, before bringing them please contact the Priory.

**New Kitchen Building:** The shell of the new building is now complete. The last of the slates were nailed down at the end of September, the guttering is finished and the windows are glazed. When the scaffolding was removed we were able to have our first unimpeded view of the building—and very impressive it is too! Most of the outside trench digging, for sewage, water and electricity, has now been done and the 'extern sacristans' were able to get as far as pouring the concrete slab for the cloister before the seasonal wind and rain drove them indoors. Work will have to stop for a while on the kitchen building while



we transfer our attention to Myrtlebank but we hope to be able to carry on with inside finishing work later in the year.

This has been quite a year for the Building Fund—one major purchase (our biggest ever) and the on-going major construction project (our biggest ever). We had to take a number of interest-free loans to make the purchase of Myrtlebank possible. The repayments of these loans are going to be a considerable drain on the Building Fund—to the tune of over £600 a month for fifteen years. Our current income into the fund will just cover these repayments but there will be nothing left over. We still hope to finish the kitchen building, and there is much refurbishment and conversion to be done to the new property, but to carry on with this work will require your continued help and support.

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# Congregation Day 1992

The Octagon at Bristol Polytechnic has been a venue for several of our celebrations and festivals over the last few years. With its imaginative use of wood, brick, steel and lighting the main octagonal room at its centre provides a focus for religious and cultural activities at the Polytechnic. As the chaplaincy centre it has also a quiet room only used for prayer and meditation. There is a calmness about the Octagon that gives it a feel of "rightness" for Congregation Day on Friday 13th September.

The calmness however is not easy to hang on to as the day began with high winds, driving rain and lots of surface water on the motorways and roads. Happily, although the start of our day is delayed by the weather, members of the group in the South, South West, Midlands and Wales arrive safely.

Reflections on the day provide a kaleidoscope of impressions, images and memories—Reading Priory members setting up the altar; Birmingham and Worcester strive purposefully with the food, the dishes and gallons of tea; Cardiff and Chichester combine in music and precenting; Whitchurch runs the bookshop. Everyone is involved at all stages from setting up to cleaning up. Eric Jones and Tracey Curtis do a classic job of entertaining and teaching the children as Rev. Mokugen gives a Dharma talk that draws us in, encouraging us to go deeper. Again at the end of the day, in what seems initially to be a quiet informal tea, we are taken deeper into the teachings as layers of meaning help us to confront our fears and apprehensions.

A ceremony is performed honouring Avalokiteshwara, silk leaves flutter. All join in and the looks on the childrens' faces are inspiring. The room resonates to the music and singing; we strain to reach some of the notes. It doesn't matter, we are together, going, going on.

It is a joy to share our day with Rev. Mokugen, Rev. Chūshin, Rev. Mugō, Rev. Aylwin and Rev. Mildred. We bow to them, and to each other. The day is done and we return to our scattered yet connected points on the map.

Thank you all for a wonderful day.

*Brian Gay.*

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# The Next Step

Rev. Chūshin Passmore, M.O.B.C.

(The following article is an edited transcript of a talk given at an introductory retreat in June 1992.)

So what's the next step? You've been shown how to meditate and the importance of the Buddhist Precepts has been explained to you. You may also have learned one or two other things about Buddhist practice. And so, where do you go from here?

Like everything else in life, it depends entirely up to us what choices we make. One thing I can say for sure is that you don't need any more special equipment! You have a body and a mind and you now know the heart of Buddhist training. Although training is always going on and much more work remains to be done, and more to be realised and understood, all you really need is the willingness to be still in meditation and to learn how to act from that place more and more in daily life. And we can only really do that if we live as best we can following the Buddhist Precepts. 'To live as best we can' is to live the Life of Buddha. We can't find the deeper mind of meditation if we are wilfully breaking the Precepts, which is why we emphasise the practice of meditation and the keeping of the Buddhist Precepts. Indeed, these are not two things, but aspects of the one, eternal, flowing Truth.

Even before you come to the monastery, or read about Buddhism, you have all that you need. You had, have, and always will have the Buddha Nature: the expression of one's true adequacy and spiritual completeness. No matter how we feel about ourselves, whether we feel we are inadequate, useless, or lazy, or can't do this or can't do that, this doesn't affect the Buddha Nature one iota. What often happens is that we constantly compare ourselves unfavourably with

others. In the spiritual life we are often tempted to compare ourselves with those who have been training for ten, twenty, thirty years or more, or compare ourselves with Shakyamuni Buddha. We see ourselves as we are (or as we think we are) and, in despair, feel we are never going to make it or get that far.

But this is to make an unreal comparison. The Buddha Nature of Shakyamuni is the same Buddha Nature that is within your mind and body, my mind and body, and the body and mind of all sentient beings: the only difference is that He and many other men and women have realised there was a seed of enlightenment within them and they did the best training they could to make that seed grow and eventually blossom fully. But there is nothing stopping us doing the very same thing if we wish to do so. The next step, if you like, is to recognise we have both the Buddha Nature and the potential to train wholeheartedly on a spiritual path. Like the Buddha, we can find the cause and transcending of dukkha, of suffering; we can find true and unshakeable peace of mind, serenity, and happiness; we can meet the Eternal Buddha, the Unborn, the Undying, face-to-face and, in deep gratitude, do His work.

The next question is, do we want to do it or not? Do we really want to do it? If you are wise, you will say, Yes! And try not to judge yourself as not being capable of doing it, or of not being worthy of it. Just say, YES, this is what I want—I don't wish to continue suffering, and to be pushed into despair by seeing all the starvation, disease, and agonies of the world on TV every day. I truly wish to do no more harm. I want to understand better what is really going on. I want to have peace in my heart and serenity in my mind so that in my dealings with other people, those close to me and those around me, I can help them just by being what I truly am—which is the child of Buddha.

It often takes great courage to take that next step. We often feel the next step has to be some world-shaking decision which is going to cause us all

kinds of difficulties. But for most of us the next step is usually more straightforward when seen with the eye of faith and not warped by one's fears and anxieties. But however small it may seem it can be incredibly important to our spiritual health and survival. It certainly doesn't mean you have to leave your husband or wife or children and trudge off to a cave and sit in the lotus posture all day and night to find your own salvation. This is to act irresponsibly. You don't have to burn your books, or even stop watching 'Neighbours' or the 'Proms' or 'Match of the Day,' whichever is to your taste. The next step is to answer the call of the heart; it is more an internal movement rather than any external event, although some obvious changes in behaviour may be called for.

There is that within all of us which wishes to be in the mind of meditation every second of the day and night; there is that within us which wants to become one with Buddha, one with the Eternal. We don't realise this all the time because we still have much work to do, there is much karma or obstacles of defilement which need to be seen and cleansed; but there are times when we do know this longing, and the next step is to ask, how do I respond to this longing? how do I answer this call?

One way is to come to a monastery and ask yourself the question: what can I do about myself? If you are fortunate you meet someone who teaches you how to meditate; this shows you that your natural adequacy and ability to live the Life of Buddha is being fully recognised. The essence of meditation is the same for you, me, and everyone else. This doesn't mean that what is going on in the mind (or not going on!) is the same for we are all different, we have different personalities, backgrounds, tendencies and the like, but essentially it's the same thing: learning to be still, constantly coming back to the stillness. This is what Shakyamuni Buddha did when he chose to sit beneath the Bodhi tree after six years of hard ascetic practice. He decided to just sit still, breathe quietly and softly, and trust the deeper mind absolutely,



which he did. And we follow His example every time we sit down to meditate. To try and answer the question 'What is the next step?' in another way, I'd like to recite and comment on one or two of our short scriptures. The following is recited by the celebrant at the end of certain ceremonies:

We live in the world as if in the sky just  
as the lotus is not wetted by the water  
that surrounds it,  
Pure and beyond the world is the Buddha  
Nature of the trainee,  
O, Holy Buddha, we take refuge in Thee.  
(Let us bow to the Highest Lord.)

'Living in the world as if in the sky' means we don't have to overturn our lifestyles in a rash and rigid manner. Changes will certainly need to be made if we wish to progress spiritually, but they will not necessarily be dramatic. You can still live in the world, do your job, look after your family, but there is now a difference. For many people, life is really a kind of half-life, a tense unsatisfying limbo balanced between life and death. If we live this kind of half-life in the world, responding to events merely on an emotional level, blindly reacting to this or that desire while trying to satisfy this need or that need, and just allowing time to pass aimlessly, with old age and death getting closer by the minute, then we are truly suffering. We may convince ourselves for a while that there's nothing we can do about it, that when we die it's all over, nothing, an eternal vacuum, but this delusion cannot persist forever.

Some unfortunate souls may go on like this for a long time and end up on their death beds wondering, 'What was it all about? What was it all for?' This is a very sad state to find oneself in at the end of such a brief and transient life. In one respect, Buddhist training is a preparation for death, but not in some gloomy, morbid way. Indeed, we 'die' and are 'reborn' in each moment. The passing moments have only a fleeting 'reality,' and physical death is just one of

those moments. By living in the world and training ourselves as best we can, we learn to accept death as a natural consequence of life; we can then, when our time comes, die with good grace, with an open heart, and without fear. We are learning to deal with that inside us which prevents us from seeing things clearly and being one with the Unborn in every moment. What holds us back are habits of stubbornness, holding on to unwise and unhealthy opinions, indulging greed, anger, and clinging, and the like. It's no good being afraid of these things, they exist because of past mistakes, of the way we have behaved in this life and previous lives. But the Buddha shows us we can do something about it. We don't have to continue to live in greed, jealousy, or despair; we can 'live in the world as if in the sky': 'the sky' being the clear mind of enlightenment, the bright, calm mind of the enlightened being, the mind of serene reflection meditation.

'Just as the lotus is not wetted by the water that surrounds it.' The fully-opened lotus blossom is a symbol of complete enlightenment, the Tathāgata. The lotus is not disturbed by the muddy water; it doesn't pull up its roots to escape from the mud. It is all-accepting where it is. It grows straight and strong, the seeds falling back into the dark waters, sinking beneath the surface, and finally reaching the muddy bottom to grow other lotus blossoms. So by 'living in the world as if in the sky'—in other words, by doing our daily training—we are helping all beings. The example of a good and honest life is an aspect of great compassion.

'Pure and beyond the world is the Buddha Nature of the trainee.' The Buddha Nature is the same as the Deeper Mind. The Deeper Mind is not separate from the everyday mind. It's not true to say that the Buddha Mind is pure, clean, and bright and my mind is dark, ugly, or twisted. There is just the Buddha Mind. We just see it more clearly at some times than at others. This very mind and body itself are the mind and body of Buddha.

'O, Holy Buddha, we take refuge in Thee.' This points us back to the True Refuge. When you come to an introductory retreat, although you may not put it in these words, you come to find the True Refuge. This is what you're doing because you have come with a sincere heart. Even if you come out of curiosity, or to help you concentrate, or to cure your insomnia, or whatever else is the apparent reason for coming, beneath the surface of these desires and wishes is the longing to find the True Refuge. What brought you here is faith; what keeps you going is faith. The True Refuge is that which cannot be destroyed by fire, by cold, by your own or other people's opinions; It does not die, neither is It born; It doesn't change and yet is being constantly refreshed and enlivened; It will never turn away or abandon us, and yet makes no demands; It simply waits eternally for our eventual return. This Refuge is with us at all times. To find eternal life, we simply need to open the heart and trust It absolutely. Words like the Eternal, the Lord of the House, the Buddha, Nirvana, the Unborn, all refer to this One Refuge.

'We take refuge in Thee.' Transient things cannot provide a true and lasting refuge. Good health is a blessing, but it is not a True Refuge. However much time and money we spend on keeping healthy, we are still going to decay and die. One's family is not the True Refuge. We naturally love those close to us, and behave responsibly towards them, looking after ageing parents, setting a good example to our children, enjoying the fruits of family life, but when death comes all this has to be left behind.

So where is the True Refuge? The Refuge lives within one's own heart and mind. By finding and acting from this place we truly help all beings, including family and friends, and countless other beings we will never know. It is an act of faith which leads naturally to a gentle, loving certainty.

'Let us bow to the Highest Lord.' We do a lot of bowing in Buddhism. Bowing symbolises the willingness



to bend, the willingness to change. It is an act of gratitude and respect. When we bow towards the Buddha on the altar, we open up the gasshō, like a lotus bud unfolding, and make an offering of our body and mind, of our everyday training. We are bowing to the Buddha within.

The statue on the altar is still, bright, unmoving: it represents and points us towards the Buddha Mind. We are not bowing to an external deity, or any external refuge. We are bowing to that which we know in our hearts is worthy of respect, of being bowed to: one's True Self. It has been said that as long as bowing lasts Buddhism will last. If we all stop bowing—in other words, if we stop living with respect, forgetting the importance of gratitude in one's daily life—then Buddhism will gradually disappear. It will be reduced to simply another formalistic way of life....

....The question, What is the next step? is not only important for those who have just come to their first retreat. It's always important, however long you've been training, and however far you may seem to have gone. When the next step appears before us we need the courage to say, 'Right then, I don't know where this is leading, I'm a bit scared, but I know it is good to do. I will take it.' And then see what happens! Training in Buddhism can be an adventure—we may not know precisely where we are going, but we want to go on, we want to follow the path trod by the Buddhas and Ancestors. There is a verse in the 'Kyojūkaimon' which shows us how to take the next step.

....Do not continue the rolling of the wheel in the wrong direction by dwelling on the past or fearing the future. Live now without evil.<sup>1</sup>

We continue 'the rolling of the wheel in the wrong direction' by simply giving in to old unhealthy or unwise habits, habits which keep us chained to the wheel of suffering. You don't need a degree in philosophy or great intelligence to realise when you are turning

the wheel in the wrong direction. When we do so, it hurts. It's as simple as that. When you break the Precepts, there is hurt at some level or other; sometimes the hurt is severe and immediate, at other times it is so subtle we may not notice it, especially if we are not meditating. But the hurt and tension is there. And if we want to go on hurting all we need do is turn the wheel of life and death in the wrong direction by denying the Precepts.

'Dwelling on the past' is getting caught up in guilt: But what about all those horrible things I've got up to? How can I take the next step with this burden of bad stuff holding me back? This is just clinging to the past. To honestly recognise one's mistakes is not to hang on to them; it simply means we resolve to do better. Let the past go. It doesn't matter what we may have done, or what may have been done to us, just look with a compassionate eye at your body and mind and take that next step. You don't have to be tied to the past. The consequences of past mistakes may well go on affecting us for a while, but this does not mean we have to be spiritually destroyed by the past.

'Fearing the future' is to fear change, or to fear there isn't enough time left. It is to fear death. Well, when we live in fear we never have enough time for everything then becomes too much for us. But truly all we have is this present moment. Let us try our best to do what is good and right at this very moment, that's all we are really being asked to do.

'Live now without evil'. A clear straightforward teaching, but very difficult to perfect in daily life. To live by the Buddhist Precepts absolutely—this is what we should intend to do, however many times we fall short. We can do better and we all long to do better, and we must listen to that longing very very carefully: the longing to be better than we are, the longing to come ever closer to the Unborn.

Perhaps the most difficult task in training is to

learn to accept oneself completely; that is, to know oneself completely and accept oneself completely. It's not hiding from the darker side of oneself, but looking at all of oneself with honesty and courage; there is nothing whatsoever in us which is apart from Buddha or outside the Buddha Mind. Sincere, patient training allows such all-acceptance to grow within us and this results in a deep inner relaxation. Then the heart can open fully.

So what all this adds up to is that you need to recognise you have the ability to do something about yourself, and then you have to decide whether to do it or not. You have taken that first decisive step. Even if some of you decide Buddhism is not for you, fine, but I sincerely hope you all find a genuine spiritual path you can embrace wholeheartedly. The second step will come along soon enough....

....All the Buddhas are within the one Buddha Shakyamuni, and all the Buddhas of past, present, and future become Shakyamuni Buddha when they reach Buddhahood. This Buddha Nature is itself the Buddha and, should you awaken to a complete understanding thereof, your gratitude to the Buddhas will know no bounds.<sup>2</sup>

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#### Notes

1. Keizan Zenji, *Kyōjūkaimon*, with commentary by Rev. Rōshi Jiyu-Kennett (Mount Shasta, California: Shasta Abbey Press, 1977), p. 6.
2. Rōshi P.T.N.H. Jiyu-Kennett, *Zen is Eternal Life*, 3rd. ed. rev. (Mount Shasta, California: Shasta Abbey Press, 1987), p. 163.

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## Meditation Groups Round-up

LANCASTER: Contact: Paul Taylor, Lay Minister, O.B.C.  
(0524) 34031. Meetings: Mondays at 7-30pm  
in the Quaker Meeting House next to  
Lancaster railway station.

Apart from our regular Monday meetings we have come together occasionally midweek, usually Thursdays for a more informal get-together, usually at each others homes. Sometimes these irregular meetings have involved us in playing the Training & Enlightenment board game far into the night. At other times we have had readings of extracts from the Threefold Lotus Sutra accompanied by Rev. Master Daishin's taped commentaries. At the beginning of most of these meetings we usually do one of the set Rosary Contemplations, either the Life of the Buddha or the Jataka Tales. We have found this a useful exercise in familiarising ourselves with using a rosary.

The Monday meetings follow a regular format of Midday Service, two meditation periods with one walking meditation, Evening Office then tea. The evening is concluded with either a reading from one of Rev. Master Jiyu-Kennett's writings or a Journal article or alternatively we listen to a taped lecture from the Priory.

On the first Sunday of each month a group of us invariably visit the Priory for the Lotus Ceremony or appropriate Festival. As Lancaster sits on the M6 it is relatively easy for us to reach the Priory.

Last June a carload of us travelled to Manchester to join in with other North-West groups for an evening with Rev. Chushin. It was a very warm evening at the height of the heatwave in which Rev. Chūshin gave his talk on gratitude being the expression of all existence. Gratitude, he went on to say, does not require a motive to offer thanks.

During October Rev. Chūshin again visited Manchester where we again joined with the other Groups in the region.

Before the June heatwave came to an end, the entire Group had an enjoyable picnic in Eaves Wood which lies about ten miles north of Lancaster. Paul led us for a walk through some beautiful ancient broadleaf forest before we settled to our shared meal in a clearing at the summit of a hill capped by a pepper-pot shaped cairn.

Rev. Jigen came down from the Priory on September 25 and gave a public talk attended by some thirty-five people. Her theme was 'Buddhism in Everyday Life' where she covered the basics of Buddhism including the Four Noble Truths and the Precepts. A lively question and answer period followed after which refreshments were made available.

At the time of going to press, an introductory retreat led by Rev. Fuden was about to take place. Some thirty people have applied to attend.

*Norman Trewhitt, Lay Minister, O.B.C.*

MANCHESTER: Contact: Harry Melling, (0942) 260938.  
Meetings: Tuesdays at 6-30pm in the  
Central Library Hall, Manchester.

Our meetings usually consist of two meditation periods followed by tea.

During this last year we have been the host Group for the monks' visits to the North-West. These meetings have been at the Clifton Community Centre, Manchester, just off Junction 15 of the M62 where we were joined by people from Lancaster, Liverpool and Macclesfield. In June we were visited by Rev. Chūshin along with Rev. Alexander. It was so warm that particular evening that every available door and window had to be opened simply to keep cool. By contrast, when Rev. Chūshin again visited in October

it was very frosty. The October meeting was a period of questions and answers which gave us all the chance to highlight certain aspects of our training. These talks were preceded by reciting Rules for Meditation and a meditation period.

Recently, at one of our regular Tuesday meetings there was a major power failure right in the middle of the meditation period. Because we were sitting with the lights out anyway we were completely unaware of it until the end. The caretaker thought we had evacuated the building when he came to lock up and was surprised to find us still there. Nothing untoward had happened but doing everything in a dark empty building was rather strange.....

*Harry Melling.*

LIVERPOOL: Contact: Lynne Stumpe, (051) 724 3030. Meetings: Thursdays 7-30—9-30pm. For venue contact Lynne at the above phone number.

Regular meetings take the usual format of reciting Rules for Meditation followed by two periods of meditation and walking meditation. Afterwards we have tea and perhaps listen to a taped lecture. We hold a further meeting on most Sunday mornings at 9-00am.

We recently visited the Samye-Ling Tibetan Centre in Eskdalemuir for their 25th anniversary celebration. Similar social trips are arranged from time to time.

*Stuart Quine.*

FORTHCOMING EVENTS: Combined Groups calendar for 1993 yet to be finalised. Hopefully this will be published in the next issue.

HARROGATE:

This year our group has grown in number and has been enriched by visitors from Leeds, the Huddersfield



Group, Hull and Askham Grange Open Prison. (The two Buddhists from Askham attended a Lotus Ceremony at Throssel Hole Priory, one later returning for a weekend retreat. Happily both are now out and doing fine.)

Rev. Fuden, in September 1991, and Rev. Myfanwy in September 1992, led public talks and day retreats (hence the increase in numbers), and in May Rev. Edmund came down for a group evening. An added bonus was having Rev. Adelin with us for a few days while she searched out treasures for the Priory Bookshop at the Harrogate Gift Fair.

We have celebrated the Buddha's Enlightenment, Parinirvana and also Wesak. This December we plan to celebrate the Buddha's Enlightenment again, and will go on an expedition to Lincoln for rupas and books, and to contact two Buddhists who live there and who are feeling isolated. (Any readers in that area contact Pat Ki for details.)

Our thanks to everyone at the Priory for 'being here', and a special thanks to those who came here! Warm Winter wishes to all from the Harrogate group.

*Pat Ki, Lay Minister, O.B.C.*

#### ABERDEEN & EDINBURGH:

The main activity in the Autumn was a weekend visit by Rev. Edmund to Aberdeen from October 15-18. Rev. Edmund gave a Public Talk on Friday evening, led an open day-long retreat on Saturday, and a more informal meeting on Sunday morning.

For the Saturday Retreat, four members of the Edinburgh Group, Rawdon Goodier, Jenny Lyons, Myra Bothwell and Tim Gordon travelled the 120 miles from Edinburgh to share the Retreat with the Aberdeen group. It was a great joy to be able to get together in this way, and we hope to maintain the contacts between the two groups in 1993, by having one visit

each way.

On Sunday, at Yvonne and Colin Dewhurst's house, after Meditation and Short Morning Service, the Group played the Training and Enlightenment game, with Rev. Edmund as guide. As always the game brought up much to digest, but it seemed particularly helpful for Group members who have not yet been able to visit the Priory to be able to play with Rev. Edmund available to explain things.

Our thanks go to Rev. Edmund for an inspiring visit, as well as to Colin and Yvonne for their hospitality on Sunday, as well as to all who brought delicious food. Both the retreat and the Sunday meetings involved a pot-luck style lunch, which worked very well.

Group meetings and contacts are:

Edinburgh: 7-30pm. Mondays and Fridays.

7-00pm. Wednesdays.

The Salisbury Centre, 2, Salisbury Road,  
Edinburgh

Contacts: Neil Rothwell 031 228 2506.

Rawdon Goodier 031 667 5870.

Aberdeen: 7-30pm. Mondays.

Quaker Meeting House, 98, Crown Street,  
Aberdeen.

Contact: Bob McGraw 03302 4339

*Bob McGraw, Lay Minister, O.B.C.*

*Rawdon Goodier, Lay minister, O.B.C.*

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# News

**Monastic News:** On October 9, Rev. Alexander Hardcastle entered the meditation hall as the new Head Novice with Rev. Giffard Thompson as the Head Novice's assistant. We wish them every success during the coming term.

During the last few months there has been quite a bit of coming and going between the Priory and Shasta Abbey. Rev. Master Daishin went for a short visit at the end of the summer. Rev. Jigen and Rev. Aylwin left the Priory to visit the Abbey in early October. And Rev. Saïdo, Rev. Fuden and Rev. Wilfrid have all recently returned from year-long stays—we are very happy to have them back with us. Finally, Rev. Chūshin left on January 12 for the Abbey—he will be away a year.

The monks' winter '*Searching of the Heart Retreat*' celebrating the Great Enlightenment of Shakyamuni Buddha was held in the first week of December.

**Festivals & Ceremonies:** We have celebrated a number of Festivals recently. *The Festival of Avalokiteswara Bodhisattva* was held in September. *The Vigil for the Festival of Bhaisajya Guru Tathagata* took place on the evening of October 3; the following day about thirty guests joined the community for the Festival itself. Also in October was the *Festival Memorial for Great Master Bodhidharma*. We were able to show our gratitude to another of our ancestors, Great Master Keidō Chisan Kōhō Zenji, Rev. Master Jiyu's Transmission Master, by celebrating the *Festival Memorial for the Founder* on November 1. *The Festival of Remembrance* took place at the traditional time of 11.00 am on November 11th. Twenty-six guests attended the week-long '*Feeding of the Hungry Ghosts*' retreat this year, the retreat culminating with the *Ceremony of Feeding the Hungry Ghosts and The Ceremonial Burning of the Wooden Tombstones*.



**Funerals & Memorials:** On November 3. Rev. Myōhō was the celebrant for a memorial held for Brian Marwick, Sally Robertshaw's father. After the ceremony his ashes were buried in the cemetery.

We were saddened to hear of the death of one of our congregation, John Elliott, on November 11. John, from Northampton, was in a car crash late the night before and did not regain consciousness. Rev. Chūshin and Rev. Alfrid travelled to Northampton the same day and were able to perform the private funeral ceremony in the intensive care ward where John had died. The next week, Rev. Chūshin and Rev. Alfrid were joined by Rev. Gilbert and Rev. Adelin for a large public funeral ceremony celebrated at the Milton Crematorium, Northampton.

**Talks & Retreats:** Soon after returning from America in late September, Rev. Master Daishin, at the invitation of the European Buddhist Union, flew to Berlin with Rev. Aylwin Nissen to attend the International Congress organised by the EBU. With a translator at his side, Rev. Master gave a talk on the theme 'Death and Impermanence from the Buddhist Perspective.' Later in the weekend, lay minister Stefan Lang acted as translator for a guided meditation which Rev. Master led. More than 1500 people attended this event.

Monks from the Priory have recently given public talks in Huddersfield, Aberdeen and Lancaster. Day retreats were held in Huddersfield, Aberdeen, Lancaster, Norwich and Harrogate.

**Donations:** Two very generous donations have enabled us to buy an old, but sound, short wheelbase Land Rover for which we are very grateful. Other donations received over the last few months have included soap, toothpaste, towels and other household supplies, three duvets, a four-seater settee, an electric kettle, plants for the house and garden, a beautiful framed picture of Avalokiteshwara, books for the library, paint and work gloves, and treats for the Priory animals.

The kitchen thanks all those who have donated bread, biscuits, custard and cakes; teas, coffee, honey, marmite and jams; fruit, including four boxes of cooking apples; T.V.P. chunks, rice, pasta, cheese, milk and soymilk.

Thank you for the small medicine bottles that were sent in as a response to a request from the Priory's artists—they have enough for now.

**Alms Bowl:** The Bookshop would be very grateful for bubble paper and polystyrene chips. And Charlie, our young tomcat, would appreciate a plastic (not wicker) carrying basket, suitable for a fully grown cat. We would also be grateful for furniture—please see the news item 'Myrtlebank' on p. 17.

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# Reading Buddhist Priory

On 23rd November Rev. Mugō, accompanied by Angie Pedley, a Lay Minister from Reading, flew to the U.S. to visit Shasta Abbey. Angie returned after two weeks and Rev. Mugō is due to return to the Reading Buddhist Priory on the January 13. Steve Close along with his dog Honey stayed and looked after the Priory for three weeks and Rev. Myfanwy and Rev. Mildred were there for the remainder of the time.

## CEREMONIES.

On October 4 the Festival of Bhaisajya Tathagata was celebrated and the Festival Memorial for the Founder on the November 1. On September 6, nine members joined with Rev. Mildred Laser, who was celebrant, for the Festival Memorial for Great Master Dōgen. Afterwards she gave a talk on the "Foibles of Kings and Princes" which was well received.

Several congregation members and Rev. Mugō attended the opening of a Buddha Grove at H.M.P. Springhall nr. Aylesbury on October 31. A life-size Buddha statue from Thailand, plus two smaller ones, had been given to the prison and through the efforts of several Buddhist prisoners and many non-Buddhists a beautiful altar and garden had been created in a grove of trees in the prison grounds. Around 200 attended, including monks from several Buddhist traditions. Each group contributed the chanting of scriptures; we sang the Scripture of Great Wisdom, with the usual incense offering and bows. As a final offering all processed, with flowers, candle and incense, three times round the Buddha placing them on the altar before retiring to the main building for refreshments. This is the first Buddha statue to be enshrined in a British prison.

## PRIORY NEWS

Congregation members were glad to welcome back Rev. Mildred as Acting Prior while Rev. Mugō was away



for a break at the end of August. Several members helped organize a Public Talk in Reading in early October. Several of the new people present came later for meditation instruction.

#### OUTSIDE VISITS, EVENTS AND NEWS

The London Group now alternate their meeting place monthly between West Hampstead and a flat in NW3, both places being most suitable for group meetings. The Birmingham Group, who are redecorating their usual meeting room, have been meeting at a Multi-Faith Centre locally when Rev.Mugō visits. This has proved a very good venue.

A Public Talk in Exeter took place in August at the Public Library and around twenty people came. A number of people stayed to chat to group members and receive meditation instruction afterwards.

Springhead Retreat near Shaftesbury, held over the weekend October 9-11 was attended by twenty members and led by Rev.Mugō. The buildings and surrounding gardens make a good setting for retreats with the constant sound of running water reminding us of the Waters of Compassion flowing through the heart of Avalokiteshwara found within meditation. Several people new to retreats in this tradition were able to come and a date for next year's retreat has been set for October 1-3. Members of the Whitchurch Group are responsible for organizing the retreats at Springhead.

#### IN GRATITUDE

Over the past months the Priory has received many donations of food and household items: ice cream, cakes and biscuits, fruit, tempeh and food wrap; eggs, rice and vegetables; tea bags in profusion, both herb and regular tea as well as de-caff. Household items received include kitchen scales, a 'Kitchen Devil' knife set, a bread bin, food containers and glass cooking ware. A six-piece bone china tea set, gratefully received, will be for special occasions only. An easy chair, a coffee table, dressing table and T.V. stand were among the furniture donated and

box files, film, paint and tools, telephone and bracket and stepladders among the equipment received. A steady stream of computer supplies include plastic dust covers and ribbons, soft ware, discs, mailing labels, magazines and manuals. For the Sacristy: votive candles and incense, food offering dishes and decorations. Several people have offered their skills and financial assistance: hire of a van, donation of fuel and assistance with driving, production and printing of the fund-raising flyer, renovation of drums for the Sacristy and help with cost of advertising a public talk along with much 'footwork' delivering hand-bills. Rev.Mugō's visit to Shasta Abbey was made possible by kind donations towards the air fare and other expenses.

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